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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"

Another week of madness; it just doesn’t seem to end! Thankfully, we have weekends to look forward to, even if they are too short! And, the weather has been very nice, for this time of year. The leaves are falling (drat!) and it’s an enjoyable time of season. Hay, Halloween is just a few days away! Watch out for those ghosts and goblins in your neighborhood! And, before long we’ll be looking forward to spring again.

I’ve been playing around with the two new laptop computers I bought from uBid. Once I figured out what I was doing, I got them both up and running. I still have some work ahead of me to get them loaded with software, but it’s been fun - even if they aren’t Atari machines! <grin> I’ve also picked up a few other "hobby" items, from eBay, that should keep me occupied for most of the weekend, if it rains. It’s amazing what bargains you can find on the web!

Until next time...

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Site Added to XL Search

MagnusSoft’s Atari 8-bit collection is now indexed by XL Search, the Atari 8-bit file search engine.

MagnusSoft’s files appear to be self-extracting ZIP programs for DOS, containing an Atari emulator "ATR" disk image and some Windows BitMaPs of printed documentation.

See:
http://www.newbreedsoftware.com/xlsearch/

-bill!

bill@newbreedsoftware.com
http://www.newbreedsoftware.com/bill/

Whomper Stomper Available On Cart

Scott Adams classic game Whomper Stomper is now available in cartridge

format for Atari 8-bit computers with at least 48k of RAM.

http://www.atarisales.com

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone, and mother nature is still surprising us here in the northeast. We've had a nice little "indian summer" this past week. The temperature has been moderate... warm, if you take into account the time of year and location... and the skies have been fairly clear.

Of course this can only mean one thing: The weekend is gonna stink. Ain't that always the way?

I heard the other day that in addition to El Nino and La Nina, the "weather boys" now have another climatological kiddie to add to the list. Everybody give a big A-ONE welcome to "La Nada". How many names can they come up with before they finally face the fact that we're messing with things we don't fully understand and don't have the fortitude to stand up to?

Let's face it, even though no one is sure of exactly what is causing climate changes, the hydrocarbons, sulfur compounds, and carbon monoxide that we're continually pumping into the atmosphere can't be good.

CFCs are still around, even though we know what damage they can cause. Businesses and their supporters like to take a wait-and-see approach as far as the consequences are concerned even though it's well understood that IF these things ARE causing damage, it'll be decades before even the most stringent attention can correct it.

The whole situation reminds me of an old joke about a man coming home to find his wife searching the kitchen floor. When he asks her what she's doing she replies that she is looking for a quarter that she dropped in the living room. When he points out that she is in the kitchen and not the living room she replies, "I know, but the light is better in here".

I'm not claiming that any of this has anything to do with the Atari world, but the mention of La Nada started me to thinking. A dangerous thing to do these days.

Well, let's get to the UseNet stuff, huh?

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
==========

The nostalgia craze takes hold of Clay Halliwell, so he asks:

"Okay, hopefully someone knows this...

Does anyone know who composed the "Have You Played Atari Today?" ditty?

And on a less difficult note (groan), what's the name of that classical song Atari used for a lot of their TV ads back in the 80s?"

Nick Langdon tells Clay:

"You mean the one that goes "When you get an Atari Attack, just pop in Solaris for a mighty whack Jack!" I have two VHS tapes from Atari that were commercials for both the games and the ST's."

Steve Stupple adds:

"The only Atari adverts I've seen in the UK was the one they couldn't broadcast before a certain time! The one where the face is pulled off, using Terminator 2 special effects... or was it by the same computer that produced T2's effects?"

Marc Wilson asks about hard drive capacity:

"I'm upgrading my PC at the moment and fitting a new hard disk thus getting rid of the older one.

I was wondering if it is at all possible to connect the old 9.1Gb SCSI drive inside my TT in place of the older 48Mb one. Also, is it possible to connect my old SCSI CD-Writer to the TT?"

Ken Macdonald tells Marc:

"Certainly. Subject to the limitation of the physical size of the drive. just terminate it.

You'll probably want to use the external SCSI port [for the CD-Writer], so you'll need cabling, power supply, maybe a box to hold it in, and termination."

Jeremy Smith posts this about MIDI support for WinSTon:

"I've e-mailed the maintainer of WinSTon, offering to help with MIDI support for Windows, but never got a response. So I'm posting here to see if anyone wants my help or knows where I can offer to support Winston, and I'm also posting to ask for anyone who knows about the Atari ST side of things MIDI-wise (because I only know about programming MIDI under Windows, hardware and software (ie, which port is to be emulated).."

Tim Conrardy tells Jeremy:

"Thanks for your OFFER and I hope someone listens as this is DEARLY NEEDED to be able to run Atari Midi Apps on a PC (under emulation of course) There are some Atari-Midi apps that cannot be reproduced for Windows like Dr T's KSC Omega II with PVG.

I am just Encouraging you and anybody here that does Atari Emulation for PC, that this is a need.

BTW...for the Mac platform, I am happy to report that NoSTalgia DOES work for Midi. You really have to "tweak it" though. Harry Koopman (Of

Midijoy) has tested it for us on Atari-Midi Egrp."

Philippe GØrin adds:

"NoSTalgia supports Midi via Quicktime (Midi OUT) or OMS (Midi IN & OUT) but some applications are not (yet) working.

Note that the current version of NoSTalgia (0.7) has a bug preventing Midi apps to run.

Version 0.71 is planned next week."

Derryck Croker asks for help with a dial-up problem:

"My freephone ISP has changed its login procedure, and now cannot be used with IConnect. I suspect that they've gone for CHAP authentication.

No chance of using any of the available Atari stacks with that I suppose?"

Jim De Clercq tells Derryck:

"This reply is from a shell account, so I cannot just go and look, but the dial.scr text file, near the beginning, has a number flag to set, to combine header compression and PAP to get CHAP.

This is with sting 1.15.

This is an opinion, and some opinions are better than others.

Do not give up yet."

Marc Wilson asks about comparisons between the Falcon and the TT:

"Just wondering which is the most powerful between the Falcon and TT since they are both based on the same processor."

Jo Even Skarstein tells Marc:

"The TT has a 32-bit bus and a double-clocked CPU, so in this respect it's a lot more powerful than a Falcon. The Falcon has much better graphics and 16-bit stereo DMA-sound though."

Thomas Binder adds:

"Not to forget its DSP, which enables the Falcon to do things the TT won't manage, like playing MP3s at a decent speed. Of course, you need special software that supports the DSP."

J Wilkinson adds:

"A standard Falcon clocks its 68030 CPU at 16MHz, while a standard TT clocks in at 32MHz. The TT also has faster RAM access, due to wider (full 32-bit) access to memory. The Falcon system bus only uses I think 24-bits of the full 32-bits bus to access memory. Even if the Falcon CPU was clocked at 32MHz (mine is), the TT will still run ordinary software faster due to its memory access advantages.

If you use the DSP in the Falcon however the table turns somewhat. As an example I've timed depacking of JPEG image files on an STe, Falcon, and TT. The Falcon depacker used its DSP and was about 50 times faster

than the STe, and several times faster than the TT.

Other aspects draw comparison too, with the TT losing out on graphics and sound capability to the Falcon.

Both are still good machines, but the overall feel of speed would go to the TT I believe, with the Falcon winning on graphic and audio stuff...provided of course you are talking ’standard’ machines, as both can be upgraded significantly!"

Dune Dumas asks for help with PC<->ST communications:

"I want to make my mega/ste and my pc communicate. I have got a null-modem cable. I need the softs. Can anyone help me ?"

Steve Stupple tells Dune:

"Hmmm! let me think.

The simplest form of transferring for files that won’t fit on a disk is using a terminal program on both machines. However the data transfer isn’t blistering, if fact you could have a kip in the time it takes to transfer a 1 meg file! and even worse at 19,200.

The big drawback, apart from the speed, is that you have to input from BOTH machines. Which brings us nicely onto Ghostlink.

I’ve never been able to get Ghostlink to run on a Pentium class machine, but I have run it on a 486!!! Strangely with an unmodified ST I could only get the program communicating with each other at 38400bps!!!

But once launched you can use the pc drives and resources as another drive:) However speed isn’t it’s best selling point:(

There are other programs, Paralink is one which I haven’t tried yet.

For small files, as I’ve mentioned, transferring via disk is the best method. For large files there are programs that will allow you to break up a file into n amount of parts of n size, and reassemble on the other computer."

Jeff Ganaposki asks for info about displaying text... tone deaf text. <grin>:

"I would like to use my ST with its on board RF modulator to display MIDI file lyrics from my MIDI rig.

Is there any freeware or suggestions for doing this?"

Kevin Dermott tells Jeff:

"[It’s] amazingly [that] with its midi background there was never a proper program for this on the ST, there is a small tos program on my site but [it’s] very basic.

Ronald van der Kamp asks rhetorically:

"Did not the Electric Cow have a midi-payer for on-stage use and karaoke?"

Kevin replies:

"If anyone knows more please post!"

Ronald tells Kevin and Jeff:

"One asked for more info...
I looked it up.
Translated from English to German to Dutch and now back to English.

Electric Cow shareware:
MIDI Arpeggiator
for midi-sequencing and making Arpeggio sequences but also
In realtime playing of midi it is especially good for on stage use.
Useful for karaoke."

Kevin tells Ronald:

"Thanks for checking it out, I have looked at the site
http://ds.dial.pipex.com/electronic_cow/cownet.shtml and it is now freeware
as is all Electric cow products (a noble gesture) , while looking like a
handy midi tool it has no lyric display features at all, perhaps it would
make a good backing track editor /player but sadly not a karaoke machine."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time,
same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - PlayStation 2 Make U.S. Debut!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   PSX2 Games Galore! 'GameDay'!
                                    Final Fantasy IX! Dragon Lair!
                                    And much, much more!

->From the Editor's Controller - Playin' it like it is!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Well, if you haven't heard by now, the major gaming news this week is the
North American debut of the PlayStation 2! All that I've read, yesterday
and today, said that the machines are flying off the shelves. 500,000
machines and they were almost sold out immediately. Sony had better ramp up
production or the most coveted holiday present isn't going to be available
this year! We have lots of PSX2 news this week, with more to follow in the
next few weeks. Stay tuned!

Until next time...

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Sony Gambles with PlayStation 2 Game Console

PlayStation 2 may well be Sony Corp.'s biggest gamble in years.

The Japanese consumer electronics giant appears ready to make a killing when the Internet-enabled, DVD-playing successor to its hugely popular video game machine hits stores across North America on Thursday, Oct. 26.

But only if it can make enough of them.

The main risk facing Sony right now is a potential inability to produce enough of the $299 machines to meet heavy demand.

So far, it has halved planned initial U.S. shipments to 500,000 units and is diverting components from Japan to meet this.

''Maybe Sony isn't up to where they want to be because they're reducing shipments just to make that reduced (U.S.) target," ING Barings analyst Lisa Spicer said.

Shipments in Japan are suffering as a result, she said, with about 30,000 units going out every week instead of an initial 50,000 to 70,000.

Moreover, software titles -- the real heart of the video game businesses -- aren't selling as well either. Usually, two or three titles sell along with a game unit, but users appear content for now with older titles and DVD playback capability.

Sony has staked a lot on the game division, called Sony Computer Entertainment, which makes up 30 percent of profits.

With a massive 125 billion yen ($1.16 billion) spent launching PlayStation 2, Sony needs to reach and hopefully surpass its global target of 10 million units by the end of the business year next March 31.

Sony's shares price suffered in September when the company announced the reduced output for the U.S. launch.

That sparked some doubts that Sony could reach its target, despite the fact that more than 3 million units have been shipped so far in Japan.

A million of them were sold in the first week after people lined up for hours on March 4 to buy the PlayStation 2.

Critics say there's still slack in the system, which means Sony will have to depend on sales overseas to meet its target. In fact, it hopes to sell 6 million units outside Japan.

''They're betting on overseas growth. They need it -- Sony is definitely a global company," Spicer said.

Sony insists it is on track, and intends to ramp up production capacity to 1 million units per month by the end of October and then to 1.4 million per month by end of the business year.

Video Gamers Not Daunted by Smaller Playstation

Video game developers have labored for years to produce new titles for Thursday's launch of the much-hyped PlayStation 2, so Sony's decision last month to halve its rollout could have spurred widespread panic.

But independent developers reacted more with a sigh than a gasp and went back to what they do best -- playing games.

After all, sales forecasts for the $299 PlayStation 2 remain robust, despite the scaled-back launch. And game developers remain confident that millions of gamers with older consoles, such as the original Playstation, Nintendo 64, Gameboy and Sega's Dreamcast, will clamor for more games this holiday season.

Sony Computer Entertainment America -- maker of the much-awaited 128-bit processor, Internet-capable and DVD-ready version of its popular predecessor -- warned last month that part shortages would force it to halve the planned U.S. roll-out to 500,000 units from 1 million.

The U.S. unit Japanese of electronic giant Sony Corp. said it would aim to catch up to earlier production forecasts by early 2001.

But the scaling back of the PlayStation 2 launch hasn't deterred top independent game developers who expect a strong holiday season anyway.

Playstation 2 A Small Part Of This Holiday Mix

Electronic Arts Inc. will have six titles on the shelves for consumers ready to try out the new console.

THQ Inc. plans to have one game and Activision Inc. has two games for the Playstation2 launch.

New platforms and games should spell even greater sales for this holiday season than usual, analysts say, for the quarter that brings video game companies the bulk of their sales.

''This is not a big deal for the software developers. They can afford to keep printing and keep stock in inventory because they expect Sony (production) will catch up," said Frank O'Connor, editor-in-chief of video game and entertainment Web site DailyRadar.com.

Indeed, the top companies say they did not have to change their game plans or sales targets.

''We don't really see an impact from the PlayStation 2 hardware situation. We think there will be a healthy market through Christmas and early next year," said Peter Dille, THQ's vice president of marketing.

PlayStation 2 games will count for a small part of expected total sales for video game companies, with just 1.4 million PlayStation 2 consoles expected

in the U.S. market by the end of the year. That compares to some 28 million PlayStation boxes already in U.S. homes.

Games for Nintendo Co. Ltd.’s new Gameboy Advance and Gamecube and Microsoft Corp.’s much-touted Xbox, all due out next year, also are in the pipeline at many game video game makers.

‘‘We’re not presumptuous enough to say which consoles will be most successful. We supply them all," Activision Chief Executive Bobby Kotick told Reuters in an interview.

Activision’s rival for the title of second largest U.S. independent video game developer, THQ, also aims to provide games for the new platforms.

But Electronic Arts’ focus so far for new consoles has been solely on PlayStation 2. Their decision not to develop games for Sega’s Dreamcast or obtain licenses for the Xbox or Nintendo consoles has generated some controversy -- but the leading independent video game developer is not worried.

‘‘Everyone who called to ask why we aren’t on the other consoles will call and apologize when they see how we crush the launch of PlayStation2," Electronic Arts spokesman Jeff Brown said.

Strategies clearly differ among leading video game makers.

Electronic Arts is planning a hearty roll-out for PlayStation 2, putting its top brands on the shelf in hopes of capturing initial market share from the first buyers of the new console. Those users, called early adopters in the industry, are expected to be the biggest fanatics.

‘‘We think a strong market share for the hard-core gamers will be a big advantage for EA in the life of the console and will offset any possible loss from console shortages," Brown said. ‘‘The software defines the hardware, as we say in the industry. They’ve got to find out what these things can do."

Games due out for the launch from EA are mostly sports titles, and include Madden NFL 2001, SSX, Kessen, NHL 2001, XSquad and Swing Away Golf.

Also aiming to capitalize on the launch, THQ will offer role-playing game Summoner when Playstation 2 debuts. ‘‘This is a great opportunity to get on the platforms early with new brands and technology," THQ’s Dille said.

Activision has two games ready for the launch, but plans to unveil some of its more popular brands once the user base grows, and the 128-bit processor and other Playstation 2 technology can be better exploited, Activision’s Kotick said.

Its games at the launch will be Orphen, a role-playing, action game, and Sky Odyssey, a flying game, Kotick said.

‘‘The big brands you can’t do justice to at the launch because there won’t be enough time to take advantage of the hardware. Our strategy has been to take our time," he said.

Kotick predicted that game quality will improve once developers experiment for at least a year with the new platform and more consumers buy it in time for the 2001 holiday season.

Meanwhile, no one can afford to ignore the millions of existing users of older models: the original Playstation, Nintendo 64 and Nintendo Gameboy and Sega's newer Dreamcast.

Video game developers will continue to roll out new games for older consoles this holiday season, continuing with the recent trends of extreme sports, revitalizing favorite past titles and catering to younger players.

The backward compatibility feature of PlayStation2, which allows enthusiasts to play games made for the original PlayStation, should help foster continued interest in popular older games, company officials said.

Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Allocates Initial Playstation2 Computer Entertainment Systems to Retail Channel During Coveted Launch Timeframe

Continuing to value its retail partnerships, Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. announced the postponement of the e-commerce component of the company's PlayStation.com site, to ensure that retailers have the first opportunity to secure and distribute the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system at its launch on October 26, 2000. With unprecedented demand for the system, the decision underscores the company's commitment to provide PlayStation 2 hardware to more than 20,000 storefronts, which is estimated to generate more than $500 million in incremental retail sales for the category during the launch timeframe.

At launch, the company plans to ship 500,000 units of the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system, followed by shipments of approximately 100,000 units per week through the holiday season. Just two months following its launch, the company estimates that a total of 1.3 million units will be shipped into the North American market, a historic milestone for the industry.

In November, Sony Computer Entertainment America will re-launch its highly trafficked and award-winning Web site, PlayStation.com, and transform it into an online entertainment destination. As a first step in this direction, consumers will be able to purchase a variety of PlayStation products through the new PlayStation.com during its soft-launch period.

Some of these products include the newly-released PS one console, more than 200 PlayStation software titles, PlayStation-branded peripherals, and various PlayStation-related merchandise from a line of themed clothing and goods, as well as numerous audio CD titles and DVD movies. E-commerce initiatives surrounding the PlayStation 2 business including sales of hardware, software and peripherals will commence once the company ships a substantial amount of PlayStation 2 computer entertainment systems into the market.

''By choosing to postpone the PlayStation.com e-commerce launch, we are demonstrating that our priority is to support our retail partners and, ultimately, consumers who rely upon their local storefronts to purchase PlayStation products," said Jack Tretton, senior vice president, Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. ''With the upcoming launch of the revolutionary PlayStation 2, we look forward to continuing the momentum for the category at retail by being able to offer a complete end-to-end solution to the consumer with PS one and PlayStation 2 computer

entertainment system."

PlayStation 2 Debuts, But Many Will Have to Wait

The kids have been good all year in hopes that Santa will bring them a Sony PlayStation 2, but the coveted video game console that made its U.S. debut on Thursday will be in short supply until after the holidays.

Outside Sony’s futuristic Meteron center in San Francisco late on Wednesday night, Tony Gautier, 28, said he and his friends -- part of a crowd of about 1,000 waiting to buy the new console -- were there ‘‘to make sure we don’t have to wait until after Christmas."

Sony Computer Entertainment America, a unit of Japanese Electronics giant Sony, had to halve the initial U.S. roll-out to just 500,000 consoles because of parts shortages.

While the company has admitted that the scaled back launch of the snazzy game player would not be enough to meet demand, no preliminary sales data were available on Thursday.

‘‘We are sold out," said Jim McManus, spokesman for home electronics retailer Best Buy, but declined to give sales figures.

Toysrus.com said its Web site sold out of the consoles in 30 seconds. It declined to say how many were offered.

‘‘I think it’s a testament to how big the business has become," Jack Tretton, senior vice president of sales for Sony Computer Entertainment America, told Reuters.

‘‘We’re talking about $400 million in retail revenue in a matter of hours in software and hardware. It’s staggering. And that’s not anywhere near enough to satisfy demand," he said.

Selling for $299 each, the PlayStation 2 has double the capacity of its popular predecessor with a 128-bit processor, plays DVDs and can access the Internet with an add-on.

Tretton referred to $150 million in hardware sales and an estimated $250 million in sales of software and peripherals, such as joysticks and memory cards.

New shipments were expected to hit stores on Thursday and Friday, and about 100,000 per week on average were anticipated to arrive at U.S. retailers, a Sony spokesman said.

CABBAGE PATCH REDUX?

Japan’s Sony, which on Thursday posted a 57.4 percent drop in quarterly profits, has staked a lot on the successor to the original PlayStation, the top-selling video game machine.

Sony said it had sold a total of 3.54 million PlayStation 2 consoles so far, and reiterated that it was on track to reach its target of selling 10 million of the sleek black consoles by the end of the business year to March 31.

‘‘PlayStation 2 is our important gateway to the future," Masayoshi Morimoto, Sony’s senior executive vice president, told reporters in Japan.

In the United States, some retailers accepted pre-orders for the consoles before the launch, and it wasn’t clear if there would be enough to fill those orders.

‘‘Every unit we have until the end of the year is sold," said John Woodson, president of the Internet division of Babbage’s Etc., a unit of Barnes & Noble that had taken more than 200,000 pre-orders for its Babbage’s, Software Etc, Gamestop and Funcoland stores.

‘‘Everything we get Thursday has been presold, but we’ll be able to put subsequent shipments on shelves before Christmas," said Jeff Griffiths, senior vice president of merchandising and distribution at Electronics Boutique, which has taken 100,000 preorders for shipment by Christmas.

Sony itself had to postpone selling the machines on its PlayStation.com site in order to divert as many units as possible to retailers.

Even retailers that did not accept pre-order, including Wal-Mart, Kmart, and Best Buy, cautioned that units were very limited and expected to sell out swiftly.

‘‘It’s gonna be worse than Cabbage Patch Kids," said Andrew Smith, a legal assistant and PlayStation fan.

Online retailers Amazon.com, Toysrus.com, and buy.com said they would have a limited number of units on hand for ordering at various hours on Thursday. On eBay, the leading online auctioneer, the bidding on a confirmed pre-order rose to $1,000 before the launch.

IF NOT SONY, NINTENDO OR SEGA?

If all else fails, there are other video game consoles that fit easily under the tree.

Sony rival Nintendo said its focus is going to be on games. On Thursday, Nintendo was launching a top-tier game title, ‘‘Legend of Zelda 2." Meanwhile, its ‘‘Gold" and ‘‘Silver" Pokemon games have been breaking industry sales records.

‘‘A lot of people buy Nintendo because they love the games that are exclusive to Nintendo," said Perrin Kaplan, the company’s vice president of corporate affairs. ‘‘Like having favorite authors, people have favorite developers and games."

Nintendo has 1,000 games available for all of its gaming devices, including the hand-held GameBoy and Color GameBoy, vs. 26 titles at launch for PlayStation 2.

‘‘Hopefully retailers will be strategic so that if people go to the Sony shelves and find nothing there, there will be something neat from Nintendo and they’ll still get a sale, some sale," Kaplan said.

Sony’s biggest competition could come from the Dreamcast, the 128-bit console made by Sega, which should be readily available at retail stores for $149. A unique feature is its 56K modem, which enables online competition and verbal communication between remote players.

‘‘There’s a lot of hype about PS2 being the next thing, but when it comes down to it, the online gaming piece is the future, not adding a lot of old technologies together in one bundle," said Chris Gilbert, an executive vice president of Sega of America.

Sony is still marketing its original PlayStation, which is now priced for retail at $99. The original is an entry-level game console, that may be more appropriate for a younger, less experienced, or less tech-savvy player.

‘‘We’re looking to make strides in the under-12 market," said Sony Computer Entertainment spokeswoman Molly Smith. Despite the other offerings, and the challenges, only the PlayStation 2 will satisfy the most dedicated video game fans, and only in the timeliest fashion.

‘‘Right now it’s the hardcore gamers," said high school student James Mazur, who saves his birthday money to buy game systems. He profited by selling a pre-order for a PlayStation 2 on eBay for $510. ‘‘But closer to Christmas," he said, ‘‘it’ll be the parents shelling out."

Microsoft Works on Xbox As PlayStation 2 Debuts

Microsoft has a message for all those video game fanatics ready to snatch up Sony Corp.’s PlayStation 2 this week: You ain’t seen nothin’ yet.

The Japanese electronics giant will grab headlines this Thursday when the much-anticipated video game console splashes down in the United States, but Microsoft is determined that Sony won’t hog the limelight for long.

This time next year the Redmond, Wash.-based company will be taking the wraps off its Xbox -- a device it claims will be the most powerful video game console on the planet.

‘‘In terms of the launch activity and commitment we’re making, this will be the largest launch Microsoft has ever done, by orders of magnitude," Robbie Bach, who is leading the Xbox effort, told Reuters in an interview.

Bach, whose business card reads ‘‘CXO" -- for Chief Xbox Officer -- says that by using the same kind of chips and parts found in regular computers, industry newcomer Microsoft will have an edge over its older, more experienced rivals.

‘‘You have to have graphics that people are just going to go, ’Oh my God,’ and we do get that reaction on our demos, now we have to get that in our actual product," Bach said. ‘‘I think we have put in Xbox the technology to do it right."

Certainly the hard numbers seem to bear those claims out.

The Xbox will boast a modified Pentium III processor built by top chip-maker Intel Corp. With a top speed of 733 megahertz, it is modest compared to the fastest PCs but far out-guns Sony’s 300 megahertz processor.

Polygon performance, a key measure of how fast a chip can paint graphics, is 150 million polygons-per-second for the Xbox, vs. 66 million-per-second for the PlayStation 2.

The machine also will feature separate graphics and audio chips, come with an 8-gigabyte hard disk, a DVD drive and a built-in port for high-speed online gaming.

It will not act like a PC, however. There will be no boot-up times, messy file systems or software installation.

‘‘From a consumer perspective this looks like a very simple, straight-forward proposition, like it should. You pop in a game and it plays. Our job is to hide all the complexity from everybody," Bach said.

Microsoft claims the real benefits of Xbox technology do not lie in megahertz, gigabytes or polygons but in the ease with which game creators can bring their ideas to life.

‘‘The main problem with making games is not making the games but fighting the hardware," said Seamus Blackley, who dreamed up the notion that the world’s biggest software company should try its hand with gaming hardware.

Microsoft is trying to win the hearts of developers, who have complained that PlayStation 2 is tricky to write games for. But analysts said developers will soon learn to tap the full potential of the Sony hardware.

‘‘It is a fact that PlayStation 2 is a bit of a bear to program for, at least initially," Jeremy Schwartz, an analyst with Forrester Research, said. ‘‘It was rocky to develop for PlayStation 1, but now it’s pretty amazing what they can wring out of that box."

Since new consoles sink or swim based on how many games are available, Microsoft has already lined up more than 150 outside companies and teams to create Xbox games.

It promises there will be about 30 games at launch, rising to 50 by the holidays and to 100 after several months.

Several top video games companies, such as Activision Inc., have declared their support, with one huge exception: Electronic Arts Inc., the world’s top game maker. The company has remained silent on whether it will make Xbox games, a sign analysts say indicates loyalty to Sony.

‘‘They (Microsoft) haven’t secured the key developer," Schwartz said. ‘‘To me, that’s kind of significant."

Microsoft is taking notes on how not to launch a product after Sony had to halve initial U.S. shipments to 500,000.

That angered retailers who had counted on stocked shelves for the holidays, and could possibly send customers running to rivals such as Sega Enterprises, which launched its Dreamcast last year.

‘‘We got to see what the competition did. We have a lot of experience of what they did well and what they did not do so well. So it gives us a great vantage point," John O’Rourke, director of games marketing for the Xbox team, said.

So the company is treading a fine line between telling everybody that Xbox will be second to none, and not raising hopes too high to make sure it won’t disappoint.

‘‘This is an execution-oriented business. You have to be very careful about what you promise and make sure that you over-deliver," Bach said.

One thing Microsoft isn’t promising is that the Xbox will evolve into an everything-but-the-kitchen-sink entertainment device to watch movies, surf the Web and listen to music.

Sony has played up the ability of PlayStation 2 to play DVD movies, and is seeking to turn the machine into an easy-to-use alternative to the PC for the living room.

Microsoft’s Bach questioned that strategy.

‘‘Most combo boxes don’t work. They suffer from what I call the toaster-telephone syndrome. It’s possible to make a combination toaster-telephone, but that’s not what people want," Bach said.

‘‘Xbox is a game box. It’s about having the most awesome gaming experience. Is it capable of doing other things? Yes. Is there any work going on to have it do other things? No. Are there any plans to have it do other things? No," Bach said.

Still, analysts are skeptical that Microsoft will sit by idly while Sony remakes casual computing in its image.

‘‘Microsoft seems focused on the gamer but in the fullness of time this is a bit of a Trojan horse for them, like Sony. I think Microsoft as a company feels that they can’t just let Sony take that whole market over," Schwartz said.

And it is unlikely that Sony, with its marketing prowess and huge base of loyal fans chomping at the bit for PlayStation 2, will cede the video game crown to Microsoft, Schwartz said.

‘‘Despite the sort of shortage of units for PlayStation 2, that’s really going to be the No. 1 box in the market going forward over the next couple years," Schwartz said.

‘‘The question is really who’s going to be No. 2?"

Square Announces Ship Date of Final Fantasy IX for the PlayStation Game Console

Square Electronic Arts announced that FINAL FANTASY IX for the PlayStation game console will hit U.S. store shelves on November 14, 2000. FINAL FANTASY IX, the latest title in the highly acclaimed FINAL FANTASY series and the last FINAL FANTASY title for the original PlayStation game console, will offer a rich storyline, completely new 3D environments and cutting-edge graphic technology that have come to define the FINAL FANTASY franchise as a whole.

‘‘Anticipation has been building for the next installment in the FINAL FANTASY series," said Jun Iwasaki, president of Square Electronic Arts. ‘‘Now fans of the series have only three weeks to wait before they enter the completely new world that FINAL FANTASY IX offers."

FINAL FANTASY IX takes players through an immersive storyline with numerous

subplots as they play with eight unique characters who use a variety of weapons, magic and monsters in a quest for good over evil. The game centers around an evil queen’s desire to dominate the world. Brahne, the Queen of Alexandria, has begun using highly-advanced magical weapons to terrorize neighboring kingdoms. Players follow a group made up of bandits, knights, and magicians lead by a skilled thief, Zidane, who all must ban together to try to stop the Queen. Soon after embarking on their quest, they discover that the queen’s threats merely cover a far more sinister plot. For the sake of mankind, Zidane and company must put an end to the Queen’s reign before she and the evil forces that accompany her can carry out the deadly plan.

To assist players in their journey, Square Electronic Arts has teamed with BradyGAMES to create a detailed strategy guide that offers tips, hints, maps and step-by-step instructions to help players complete the game. In addition to a traditional printed strategy guide, an interactive strategy site for FINAL FANTASY IX will be made available to players at PlayOnline.com (www.playonline.com). Using the keywords found throughout the printed guide, players can log on to PlayOnline.com and type in the keyword for in-depth information on that section of the game. Currently, PlayOnline.com offers a preview to PlayOnline, a comprehensive network entertainment and community service which is scheduled to launch in 2001 in Japan, followed by the U.S.

‘‘Using our FINAL FANTASY IX guide along with PlayOnline.com will add an exciting level of interactivity never before offered in strategy guides," said David Waybright, Director of Publishing for BradyGAMES. ‘‘Including advanced strategies, detailed maps, special secrets and more, the PlayOnline.com strategy site is just a mouse-click away for players who want to enhance their strategy guide experience."

The Japanese version of FINAL FANTASY IX hit store shelves in Japan on July 7, 2000. The game pre-sold one million units in a record-breaking 17 days and has sold through 2.8 million units to date. Sales of that game have propelled life-to-date sales of the overall series to an astounding 30 million units, making the FINAL FANTASY franchise one of the best-selling series in the history of videogames.

FINAL FANTASY IX is compatible with DUALSHOCK analog controller and has a suggested retail price of U.S. $40. The game carries an ESRB rating of ‘‘T" (Teen). BradyGAMES’ FINAL FANTASY IX Official Strategy Guide will be priced at $12.99.

Infogrames, Inc. Explodes Onto PlayStation2 Early With the Award Winning Unreal Tournament

Anticipating the demand for the top-selling game, Unreal Tournament, Infogrames, Inc. announced that Unreal Tournament for PlayStation2 began shipping this week, six days prior to the launch of Sony’s next-generation computer entertainment system.

Developed by Epic Games, Unreal Tournament, named PC Game of the Year for its raucous multi-player action and stunning graphics, makes its long awaited console debut on the PlayStation2. Unreal Tournament PS2 takes full advantage of the system’s technology to give console fans the same great experience that PC gamers have enjoyed since UT’s release and is expected to be one of the most sought after titles for the new system.

‘‘Unreal Tournament is the definitive first-person action game on the market," said Barbara Gleason, director of marketing for Infogrames’ San Jose Label. ‘‘The original game was very successful with over one million copies sold and many awards including PC Game of the Year. The next logical step was to unleash it on first-person action hungry console fans. With the advanced technology of the PlayStation2, Unreal Tournament on a console system has become a reality and will be the must-have title for the PS2."

Unreal Tournament pits players against the toughest warriors in the galaxy in multiple contests and fantasy-based settings. The goal is to become the Unreal Grand Master, testing your skills against, or fighting alongside, teams of ‘bots’ or other players. The first-person perspective action includes deathmatch and team-oriented modes of play, as well as an enhanced version of Unreal’s critically acclaimed Botmatch, which allows players to compete against extremely lifelike computer-controlled enemies in deathmatch play. In addition, Unreal Tournament’s advanced artificial intelligence allows players to lead a squad of computer-controlled allies against teams of human or computer-controlled opponents, taking the team-oriented game play experience to a new level of immersion.

‘‘With every iteration of the Unreal series we have taken the action and the graphics up a notch, and Unreal Tournament for the PlayStation2 is a shining example of this advancement," said Mark Rein, president of Epic Games. ‘‘We created a lot of new content for this version and we’ve carefully honed the controls and gameplay to ensure that UT plays phenomenally on PS2."

Rein continued, ‘‘Epic Games can now not only say that we have created one of the best PC games in the industry but can also say that we are a full-blown console game developer. This is a very proud moment for us."

Receiving many awards and accolades for its intense multi-player action, Unreal Tournament has set the standard for finely tuned first-person perspective action and console fans won’t be disappointed with UT’s robust gameplay, designed specifically for the PlayStation2. Players can choose to battle it out with other players through the 4-player split screen mode or can link several PS2’s together through the iLink connection. Unreal Tournament for PlayStation2 will be available at most major retail stores beginning this weekend for an estimated retail price of $49.99.

Dragon’s Lair Goes PlayStation 2

Hold onto your new gaming consoles PS2 owners, the award winning games that changed the gaming industry are coming to the new PlayStation 2! Dragon’s Lair, Space Ace, Dragon’s Lair II, and the newest release from Digital Leisure, Hologram Time Traveler are all PS2 compatible.

Firmly established as one of the leading brands in interactive entertainment, Dragon’s Lair has generated more than $107 million in revenues and is one of only three games ever admitted to the Smithsonian Institute (the other two being Pong and Pac Man). Dragon’s Lair II: Time Warp, the sequel to the classic original game, brings more challenges as you travel through time to save Princess Daphne from the evil wizard Mordroc.

Space Ace, the arcade follow-up to Dragon’s Lair from Rick Dyer and former

Disney animator Don Bluth, takes you on a intergalactic adventure as you play Ace on his quest to defeat the evil Commander Borf. And the newest addition to Digital Leisure's line-up, Hologram Time Traveler, which sold over $18 million in its arcade debut, remains the first and only holographic arcade game. All four are sure to be hits on the new PlayStation 2 and are available for about only $29.95 each from major retailers!

''It's a great combination - the hottest new technology and the classics that redefined the industry" stated Elizabeth Foster, President of Digital Leisure Inc. ''We're tremendously excited to be able to bring our games to a new console gaming audience."

EA Ships Fresh New Role-Playing Golf Game for the PlayStation 2 Swing Away Golf Brings Personality and Attitude to Interactive Golf

Choose your golf persona, grab your driver, tee it up and play a round of golf with Swing Away Golf published by Electronic Arts. This heralded golf PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system title, which shipped in Japan at the initial hardware launch, is available in time for the PlayStation 2 console launch in North America. Swing Away Golf is a fun, role-playing golf game that weaves character personalities, course creator features and drama into the interactive golf experience.

''With Swing Away Golf available at the launch of the PlayStation 2 console it adds to the breadth and depth of EA's PlayStation 2 launch title line up. Shipping alongside EA SPORTS established titles like Madden NFL 2001 and NHL 2001, as well as EA SPORTS BIG new title, SSX, Swing Away Golf is another fun, immersive gaming experience from EA for PlayStation 2 console owners," said EA's vice president of marketing, Chip Lange. ''The Japanese version of the game was very well received at launch in Japan and we expect that American game players will be entertained by the style and attitude of Swing Away Golf."

Players can compete in Normal Mode, where two golfers can go head to head or a single competitor can challenge the computer. The key role-playing mode is Story Mode where players can practice their game and then apply their skills in tournament play. Golfers climb the ranks from Amateur to Professional, unlocking additional characters and courses along the way. The rewards for winning a tournament are more than bragging rights; they are points and virtual prize money. With earned points, players can enhance their characters' playing abilities in such areas as hitting distance, accuracy, control and more. Prize money can be spent in the pro shop on equipment upgrades, clothing and high-performance golf balls. The competition heats up as players build up their golfers' skills, equipment and personalities.

Swing Away Golf also has a course architect where game players can create their own courses. Everything from the slope of a bunker to the number of lakes can be adjusted as players build up their custom course hole by hole. The combination of customizable courses along with weather conditions, which are determined by the Artificial Intelligence and affect course play, further enhance the game's replay value. Weather conditions can range from a sunny windless day, to strong gusty wind and light rain, all of which have their own effect on the flight of the ball and its ensuing movement on the grass.

Additional key features in the game are the characters' emotions and the swing meter. The characters have individualized personalities and their emotions, reactions and interaction with each other are integral to the role-playing experience. Computer opponents will try to psych out their opposition before teeing off, and a well-played hole can result in a smug look, a gleeful giggle or a waggle of the finger. A misplaced shot or two could leave a frustrated golfer crestfallen, on her knees. There are also six caddies to choose from and each caddie has something different to offer and a varied way of strategizing the best shot. From the bubbly novice caddie, to the experienced and critical caddie, they are never at a loss for useful bits of advice or support for the golfer under their watchful eye. On the technical side of things, the sensitive Swing Meter allows both experienced interactive golf players as well as newcomers to video games ease of play. It's all about timing, which is easy to learn but challenging to master, as it is the same three taps of the gamepad for a flawless drive or a botched putt.

Swing Away Golf is rated ''E" (Everyone) with a ''suggestive themes" descriptor. Consumers may purchase the game directly at the EA Store(SM) (http://www.eastore.ea.com) or by calling EA Direct Sales at 877/324-2637. T&E Soft, Inc. developed Swing Away Golf. The title has a suggested retail price of $49.95. For additional screen shots and press materials about Swing Away Golf and the entire EA SPORTS lineup go to http://retailsupport.ea.com/press.

Infogrames, Inc. Sends Down and Dirty Destruction Racing to Stores This Week With Demolition Racer--No Exit for Sega Dreamcast

Infogrames, Inc. announced that its action racing game, Demolition Racer--No Exit, for Sega Dreamcast is shipping to stores this week. The game lets players participate in fast action demolition derby races with 16 cars on a track at one time. Demolition Racer--No Exit for Sega Dreamcast offers all of the great gameplay the franchise is known for, with enhanced graphics and many new Dreamcast-only features.

''Forget whatever game you're playing now," said Laddie Ervin, director of marketing for sports and racing titles at Infogrames, Inc. ''With handling as smooth as butter, dazzling graphics, gratifying destruction and all-out insane gameplay, you won't be able to tear yourself away from this game."

Running at 60 frames per second, Demolition Racer--No Exit offers brand new cars, tracks and power-ups along with enhanced artificial intelligence and a more accurate scoring system. The game lets players participate in action-packed races with 16 cars competing against each other on 12 different tracks. In order to be successful, players must cause massive damage to opponents' cars, while also concentrating on racing well and finishing high in the pack. Damage points and one's placement in the race are combined with a multiplier to determine the winner of each race.

Demolition Racer--No Exit offers 12 all-new highly detailed cars with environment mapping. Players can race against several different car types on one track, including demolition derby-style vehicles, muscle cars and sports cars.

Set in unique environments, the game's 10 new tracks feature an aircraft

carrier, a country road, a parking garage, a storm drain, a scrap yard and traditional speedways. Players can compete in several types of demolition derby events, including demolition racing, bowl matches, stock car racing, last man standing, suicide racing and the new No Exit mode.

Following a collision, vehicles catch fire, billow smoke and visibly show damage, such as wobbly tires and dents, while hoods and other car parts fly off. Gameplay includes colossal jumps, shortcuts, collidable objects, with huge points awarded for a T-bone hit and a one-hit takeout move that occurs when a car catches air and lands on top of another car.

In an effort to keep up the fast-paced action in Demolition Racer--No Exit, players can earn health points for their car by picking up strategically placed repair power-ups. Other power-ups include boxes with huge bonus points and a power-up that allows the player who obtains it to ‘‘steal" the health from an opponent’s car upon hitting it.

The licensed soundtrack for Demolition Racer--No Exit includes six new songs exclusive to the Dreamcast version along with an additional band. Music from such bands as Road Runner Records’ alternative band, Fear Factory; Moonshine Music’s break beat trio, Cirrus and British techno-dance music trio, Empirion. Also included are tracks from industry veteran, Tommy Tallarico, a remix from Holland’s mix-master, Junkie XL, and music from the Coffee Boys, a band new to the soundtrack.

Developed by The Pitbull Syndicate, Demolition Racer--No Exit will be available in most major retail outlets for an estimated retail price of $39.99. For more information visit the Web site at www.demoracer.com.

Capcom’s Street Fighter EX3 Launches With PlayStation 2

U.S. Version an Enhanced Version of Japanese Release

Capcom Entertainment announced the release of Street Fighter EX3 for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system. Heralded as the mother of all fighting games for more than a decade, Street Fighter EX3 is the pinnacle of the series that introduced Capcom’s multi-million unit selling Street Fighter franchise into the world of 3-D. Street Fighter EX3 takes full advantage of the PlayStation 2 hardware with the U.S. product an enhanced version of the Japan release. The enhancements in Street Fighter EX3 include optimizing the code to increase game play speed, the ability to select a computer opponent and a special move command list viewable during gameplay. Street Fighter EX3 delivers Capcom’s signature gameplay and offers players a variety of attack moves including, momentary combo, critical parade and character change. Each of the amazingly lifelike Street Fighter EX3 characters possess their own unique character design and stunning animations. Street Fighter EX3 is rated ‘‘T" by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) and is expected to carry the suggested retail price of $39.95.

‘‘Street Fighter EX3 was the number one fighting game at PlayStation 2 launch in Japan," said Todd Thorson, director of marketing, Capcom Entertainment. ‘‘With the U.S. release of the PlayStation 2 months after the Japan release, the development team used this valuable time to further enhance the U.S. and European versions. We know consumers will be pleased with the results."

Street Fighter EX3 hosts the following new features and enhancements:

* Optimized code to increase gameplay speed
* Special move command list viewable during gameplay (pause and choose command list)
* CPU opponent can be chosen in the multi-play mode of Arena mode.
* Introduces a new character: Ace
* Momentary Combo - Additional attacks are achieved by pressing an attack button at the exact moment a special move hits the opponent or is blocked by the opponent.
* Critical Parade - Two characters simultaneously attack
* Character Change - Character change doesn't simply mean changing characters. In SFEX3, players can perform a combo that delivers devastating attacks while changing characters.
* Emotional Flow - When one of the player's characters is knocked out, the remaining character becomes enraged and takes over the Super Combo Gauge of the knocked out character. The remaining character becomes invincible for a short period of time.

Leveraging the awesome power of the PlayStation 2, Street Fighter EX3 combines stunning graphics and dazzling special effects never before possible. Players will be immersed in the world of Street Fighter through beautifully detailed scrolling backgrounds and fluid character animations. Players will also experience new innovations in lighting and background effects. Each combo and super combo possesses awe-inspiring graphics that will keep players screaming for more.

Street Fighter EX3 features several modes of play, each adding to the overall gameplay experience. Original Mode is a one player only mode that allows players to choose a fighter and complete various stages to defeat the final boss. This stage includes 1-on-3 or 2-on-1 matches and tag team battle. Arena Mode lets players choose between computer or human opponents and adjust various match rules. Character Edit Mode challenges players to complete missions and gain experience as they take the role of a new character named Ace. Once enough experience is gained, players can buy new moves and build the overall strength of the their character. Training Mode allows players to practice various moves and combos.

Street Fighter EX3 boasts 16 playable characters, the most ever in the Street Fighter EX series. Players can choose from the perennial favorites Ryu, Ken or Chun Li or they can select: Guile, a military expert from the United States; Zangief, the massive Russian wrestler; Blanka, the shocking beast from South America; Dhalsim, the Yoga master from India; Doctrine Dark, an emotionally scarred ex-military specialist; Vega, a mysterious ninja from Spain who believes beauty is absolution; Jack, a thug-like guard from the evil Shadowloo organization; Hokuto, a martial arts expert seeking the whereabouts of her brother; Skull-o-mania, a misguided salesman who believes that it is his fate to become a super hero; Sharon, a top notch assassin whose work is focused on espionage; Nanase, Hokuto's younger sister who uses the ancient art of stick fighting to defeat her opponents; Sakura, a student who has become a Street Fighter to prove that a woman can have both strength and beauty; and introducing Ace, a brand new character who players can select during edit mode to build their skills and then save the data for use in other game modes.

989 Sports' to Release NFL GameDay on November 14 for the PlayStation2 Computer Entertainment System

Continuing the tradition of delivering the most intense professional football action through unparalleled gameplay and visuals, Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. announced that the long-awaited NFL GameDay 2001 from 989 Sports development team will be available on November 14 for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system. NFL GameDay 2001 features NFL teams and players, 3D player and stadium models scaled with incredible detail and realism and more than 1,100 position-specific motion-captured moves from 14 NFL players. Longtime favorites Dick Enberg and Phil Simms add to the GameDay experience with their famous, significantly broadened play-by-play commentary.

The gritty football action and award-winning gameplay that GameDay fans love is brought to life like never before with new visual breakthroughs including the exclusive new ProTalk feature. Gamers can now actually see animated lip-service offered up by players and referees, adding to the total experience. NFL GameDay 2001 sports the most realistic graphics to date with each NFL player depicted in amazing detail as they are scaled to their actual size, weight and body style. Utilizing the technology afforded by the new PlayStation 2, details such as skin tones, face mask styles, jerseys, arm bands and neck rolls make the players on the field appear to be more real. Stadium interiors are richly detailed and enhanced by animated backgrounds and historic landmarks and during the game, players will actually experience wear and tear on the playing field.

‘‘The 989 Sports team is utilizing the power of the PlayStation 2 to bring the football genre to new heights with NFL GameDay 2001," said Ami Blaire, director, product marketing, Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. ‘‘With NFL GameDay 2001 for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system, fans that have enjoyed the GameDay series for the past five years will find that the 989 Sports’ team has brought the essence of the GameDay experience to a new level."

NFL GameDay 2001’s unprecedented 60 frames per second gameplay allows gamers to feel the smoothest and most responsive gameplay ever created. For the first time, each player occupies their own personal, 3D space which allows gamers to move around the field like a ball carrier during a NFL game. Smarter Artificial Intelligence (AI) has computer-controlled opponents exposing tendencies on both the offense and defense. Total Control Passing allows players to lead or under throw receivers in any direction by simply pressing the directional buttons.

For the first time, animations including drag downs, shoves, gang tackles, low and high-wrap tackles, upending tackles, across-the-body ‘‘shoestring" catches, sideline ‘‘tip-toe" catches and one-handed catches help capture the intensity of real NFL action. Players can break ankle tackles and drag would-be tacklers on second and third efforts.

NFL GameDay 2001 reflects the latest NFL trends through actual NFL player input -- from motion-capture animations to plays designed with the help of real NFL players. Players motion captured for the NFL GameDay series are among the game’s top names, Buccaneers FB Mike Alstott, Steelers RB Jerome Bettis, Vikings DT John Randle, Raiders WR Tim Brown, CB Charles Woodson, and Giants CB Jason Sehorn. Among the more than 55 NFL stars creating the authentic playbooks for NFL GameDay 2001 were Buccaneers DL Warren Sapp, Vikings QB Daunte Culpepper, Bengals RB Corey Dillon and Dolphins LB Zach Thomas.

GameDay includes many of the features that gamers have come to expect such as the ‘‘General Manager Mode" that lets the gamer play in multiple

seasons as a coach, player or general manager. The ‘‘Draft War Room" feature provides the gamer with a report of team weaknesses allowing players to determine needs on draft day. Gamers can control the everyday activities of a team over several seasons while drafting, trading and signing free agent players. The revolutionary ‘‘Play Editor" lets the gamer design custom plays and save them to a playbook.

Players can also direct how and where each player will move by assigning individual routes, blocking schemes and defensive alignments and assignments. NFL GameDay 2001 has also refined the ‘‘Create Player" feature, allowing gamers to customize a player’s physical appearance, salary and mental makeup.

NFL GameDay 2001 for the PlayStation 2 Computer Entertainment System Key Features:

-- Award-winning signature gameplay including a new feature that allows gamers to see and listen to the emotion of the NFL like never before with the exclusive ProTalk feature, where mouths actually animate movements while dishing out smack
-- Hundreds of new plays designed with the help of 55 NFL players containing the latest trends, formations and plays
-- All-new 3D player and stadium models and tons of motion capture animations from 14 different NFL players, including Charles Woodson, Akili Smith, Jimmy Smith and Mike Alstott
-- NFL teams and players scaled to actual height, weight and body style
-- Amazing visuals including accurate player details such as visors, wristbands and gloves
-- New action-moves such as across-your-body catches, sideline "Tip-Toe" catches and one-handed catches help add to the excitement of the pros
-- New flip tackles add excitement and help exude the power and intensity of pro football
-- Actual NFL stadiums feature historic landmarks and grass that experience wear and tear as the game progresses
-- Play-by-play legend Dick Enberg and color commentator Phil Simms return with broader and more conversational commentary and insight
-- In-depth NFL player ratings and updated 2000 team rosters, including rookies, free agent signings and trades
-- "GM Mode" lets the gamer be the coach, player or general manager over multiple seasons, operating with a salary cap. The new "Draft War Room" feature alerts player to team weaknesses. Create, draft, sign, trade and release players and free agents -- just like a real GM
-- In-game help menus assist new users who are unfamiliar with the in-game controls
-- Team match-ups that detail offensive and defensive strengths and weaknesses
-- Design plays and save them to a custom playbook with the revolutionary "Play Editor" allowing gamers to direct how and where players move by assigning pass routes, blocking schemes and defensive maneuvers
-- Create a player with the updated "Create Player" feature -- customize a player’s physical appearance, such as face style, face mask, salary and mental makeup
-- Players perform as in real life as Marshall Faulk jukes to elude flailing arms, Eddie George punishes would-be tacklers and Randy Moss elevates over shorter defenders to grab the deep ball
-- Multiple weather conditions including wind, snow and rain as well as player injuries affect gameplay
-- Comprehensive season statistical tracking in 163 categories -- for either a team or a player
-- Gameplay modes include preseason, 2000-2001 NFL season play, playoffs,

Super Bowl and Pro Bowl
-- Pro Bowl selections are based upon the current season with weekly voting updates
-- "Throwback" uniforms let gamers relive the past with a favorite team
-- Includes every past Super Bowl team such as the ’75 Steelers, ’85 Bears and ’94 49ers
-- Genuine NFL stadium, game and crowd sounds
-- Four playing perspectives and a free-floating 3D TV-style presentation
-- Four levels of difficulty -- Rookie, Veteran, All-Pro and Hall of Fame
-- Complete substitution capability
-- Up to 8 players with Multitap
-- Officially licensed by the NFL and PLAYERS INC

Club Acclaim Celebrates a New Era With Bust-A-Move Millennium for Game Boy Color

Club Acclaim, the youth division of Acclaim Entertainment, a worldwide interactive entertainment company, announced that Bust-A-Move Millennium for Game Boy Color has shipped to national retail outlets.

‘‘The Bust-A-Move series has conquered virtually every gaming platform with its unique brand of addictive, intoxicating gameplay," said Christina Recchio, Marketing Manager, Club Acclaim. ‘‘Bust-A-Move Millennium brings the hit series back to its Game Boy roots where it will continue to provide infinite hours of excitement for gamers of all ages."

In the exciting new installment of Club Acclaim’s popular Bust-A-Move puzzle series, Bust-A-Move Millennium delivers an engaging storyline with competitive gameplay for one or two players. In this new game, the Golden Puzzle has been stolen, the once peaceful Puzzle World has plunged into chaos and gamers are challenged to restore order back to the magical land by racing against time to complete colorful boards of bursting bubbles.

Bust-A-Move Millennium was developed by Taito and features 16 outrageous characters, obstructive bubbles and blocks, plus bonus bubbles and stars. Also added are all-new gameplay modes including storm mode and puzzle mode, which allows players to choose their own course throughout multiple game stages.

Infogrames New ’Moto Racer World Tour’ Video Game Complete

The thrills and spills of motorcycle racing are headed to the PlayStation game console as Infogrames, Inc. announced that Motor Racer World Tour has entered into manufacturing and will be released to retail outlets nationwide on November 7 for a suggested retail price of $49.95. Developed by Delphine Software, Moto Racer World Tour offers a wide variety of realistic motorcycle racing challenges on tracks across the globe.

‘‘Moto Racer World Tour delivers all the excitement and challenges of extreme motorcycle racing," said Martin Currie, Director of Marketing for Infogrames. ‘‘Both casual and hardcore gamers will enjoy the game’s wide variety of racing styles, game modes and vivid 3D graphics, making Moto Racer World Tour the perfect holiday season gift."

Moto Racer World Tour provides one of the most feature-rich motorcycle racing games available. In addition to advanced game physics and 3D graphics, Moto Racer World Tour features:

- Six Types of Racing - such as Speed Racing, Supercross and Motocross, Time Trials, Dragster, Freestyle and Traffic;

- Five Different Modes of Play - including Practice, Single Race, Time Attack, Arcade Mode, Championship Mode;

- Customized Motorcycles - players can customize their bike’s engine, suspension and transmission;

- Force Feedback Control - provides players with controller feedback so they can feel all the jolts and jumps.

- Replay Mode - gives players the ability to watch their entire race from start to finish.

FantaVision Brings an Explosive Display of Brilliant Pyrotechnics Into the Home on PlayStation2

Innovative New Fireworks Puzzle Action Game Displays the Full Graphic Potential of PlayStation 2 Computer Entertainment System

Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. announced the release of FantaVision, a fast-paced action-puzzle game for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system that allows players to create, control and detonate dazzling fireworks displays any day of the year. With its combination of innovative, addictive gameplay and advanced graphics, mixed with stunning lighting and special effects, FantaVision is one of the most visually impressive titles available for the launch of the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system.

FantaVision takes puzzle games to a whole new dimension combining action, shooting, strategy and puzzle-play mechanics, allowing gamers to set the skies ablaze by controlling magnificent fireworks displays in settings all over the world. Players use an on-screen cursor to select color combinations of fireworks that are launch onto the screen and then detonate them to create stunning chains of explosions. The more impressive the display, the more points that are awarded, allowing players to move onward to advanced levels and to unlock bonus rounds. The 3D graphics and real-time lighting effects allow users to individually render totally unique fireworks sequences every time they play.

‘‘FantaVision takes full advantage of the graphic capabilities of the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system and combines it with highly-addictive puzzle gameplay that is sure to ignite a whole new craze around the world," said Ami Blaire, director, product marketing, Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. ‘‘FantaVision was designed to entertain and challenge players of all ages. Once you get the hang of it, you won’t be able to put it down!"

FantaVision delivers adrenaline-pumping action to players as they blast their way through eight levels of frenetic gameplay, creating intricate and

impressive fireworks displays over a variety of settings, including familiar cityscapes, an amusement park and an orbiting space station. A two-player mode adds even more depth and challenge to this innovative experience, where quick-thinking and lightning-fast reactions are the only weapons at your disposal.

In addition, FantaVision encourages players to step back and admire the true splendor of their handiwork through the replay mode, which allows them to select the camera angle, change conditions such as weather, and add a variety of cool, psychedelic special effects.

Key Features of FantaVision:

-- A pyrotechnics puzzle craze: A fast and furious puzzle game taken to all new heights. Combines action, shooting, strategy and puzzle gameplay. It’s totally addictive with mind-blowing intensity
-- Addictive, challenging, fast-paced gameplay: A combination of unique gameplay and advanced graphics, mixed with stunning lighting and explosive visual effects. The game delivers progressively challenging and graphically stunning landscapes for an experience like no other on the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system
-- Think fast and react even faster: Test your reflexive skills both strategically and reactively-timing is everything in this action-packed extravaganza
-- Spectacular display of colorful fireworks: The full graphical capabilities of the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system are truly exposed in this new action-puzzle game. The fireworks are made up of hundreds of particles, each particle calculated in real-time to deliver a breath-taking display of graphical excellence
-- 1 - 2 players head-to-head action: Play against the CPU or blow your friendships to smithereens. Guaranteed for hours of explosive and electrifying thrills

Key features in FantaVision (continued)

-- Set in environments all over the world: From cityscapes and amusement parks to the far reaches of outer space. Design and detonate an awesome show of willow, peony, circular and splash flares
-- Combinations, chain reactions, explosions: Players can create fantastic fireworks displays using a combination of unique gameplay and advanced graphics, mixed with excellent lighting and explosive visual effects, making this one of the most visually-impressive launch titles available on PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system

The independent Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) rates FantaVision ‘‘E" for ‘‘Everyone." For more information about the ESRB visit www.esrb.org.

Midway is ’Ready 2 Rumble’ With All-New Version of Popular Over-the-Top Boxing Sensation

Midway Sports Asylum, the sports brand of leading software industry publisher and developer Midway Games Inc., announced that the highly anticipated ‘‘Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2" for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system and Sega Dreamcast will shipped to retail this week.

‘‘Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2" for the PlayStation game console, and Nintendofi 64 will be available on November 14. Capitalizing on the unique and hilarious personality of this best-selling franchise, ‘‘Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2" brings a new level of style and attitude to the boxing ring.

Leaving none of the elements of the original best-seller behind, the new digitally sophisticated and visually stunning ‘‘Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2" combines the intense boxing competition and outrageous action that made ‘‘Ready 2 Rumble Boxing" a hugely popular entry in the fighting/boxing category.

Ten of the original characters are back with updated costumes, special moves, taunts and new ‘‘Rumble Modes," three levels of ‘‘rumble flurries" include all-new ‘‘Knock Out of The Ring Punch."

‘‘The ’Ready 2 Rumble Boxing’ franchise has a very strong personality, which is back in great fighting form for ’Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2,"’ said Helene Sheeler, vice president of marketing, Midway. ‘‘Gamers will be excited with all of the new moves, characters and wild taunts."

In addition, all-new characters and several hidden celebrity boxers such as NBA big-man Shaquille O’Neal and ‘‘King of Pop" Michael Jackson enter the ropes with distinctive flair and personality.

Superstar Jackson was motion-captured and digitally photographed so that his seemingly endless dance moves and inimitable style could be incorporated into the game. As with each of the ‘‘Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2" characters, Jackson will enter the ring as a larger-than-life ‘‘Rumble-ized" version of himself.

‘‘Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2" features Michael Buffer, ‘‘The Voice of Champions" and his famous ‘‘Let’s Get Ready to Rumble" trademark call. In the game, players will be able to compete in Arcade-Style Mode and fight for the championship belt. ‘‘Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2" also features an enhanced Championship Mode, where players take on the role of boxer and manager, overseeing the grueling calendar, scheduling fights and supervising the fighter’s training regimen. With new mini games, players can train to build power, speed, stamina, punches and durability in order to move ahead and beat their opponent.

New Characters

* Mama Tua -- mother of former boxer-turned-wrestler Salua
* G.C. Thunder(TM) -- Afro Thunder’s cousin and arch rival
* Joey T -- former hit man turned boxer
* Shaquille O’Neal - 1999-2000 NBA MVP
* Michael Jackson -- the King of Pop
* Johnny ‘‘Bad" Blood -- brother of former boxer, Jimmy Blood
* Freak E. Deke -- hyper guy, mosh pit fighter and punk rocker
* Freedom Brock -- from hippie surfer to flower child activist,and now, boxer
* Wild Stubby Cooke - rodeo star turned pugilist
* Rumble Man -- Michael Buffer
* Robox -- state-of-the-art boxing robot

‘‘Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2" Key Features

* PlayStation 2 and Sega Dreamcast versions -- 23 total characters including 13 new boxers, including special celebrity characters, and

10 updated returning boxers from the original ‘‘Ready 2 Rumble" Boxing
* PlayStation version -- 20 total characters with 10 new boxers, including special celebrity characters, and 10 returning boxers
* Nintendo 64 version -- 17 total characters with seven new boxers, including special celebrity characters, and 10 returning boxers
* New mini games, taunts, introductions and victory dances
* New special moves, combos and three levels of ‘‘rumble flurries" with a ‘‘Knock Out of The Ring Punch"
* New extreme reactions and knockdowns
* Exciting new party modes include tournament mode and team battle mode
* Enhanced championship mode
* Enhanced detail effects make boxers’ clothes and hair more realistic, including motion blur (only for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system)
* Improved single player AI

EA Ships NHL 2001 for the PlayStation 2

It’s time once again to lace up your skates, throw on your helmet and get into the game with NHL 2001 for the new PlayStation2 computer entertainment system, released this week by Electronic Arts.

The first hockey title available for the next generation console, NHL 2001 provides the most realistic hockey experience to date, challenging gamers to get out of the stands and onto the ice.

Get on the ice and skate with or against any of the 30 NHL franchises, including the expansion Columbus Blue Jackets and Minnesota Wild, or choose from 20 of the best International teams. State of the art PlayStation 2 graphics deliver the in-game drama of a real hockey match, as gamers can watch skaters jostle for position prior to a face-off, or coaches pace behind the bench while voicing their opinion about a referee’s call. Only in NHL 2001 can gamers feel the tension as two skaters jaw at each other until the referee warns them to back off or they’ll do time in the ‘‘box." In addition, face mapping was used in designing the skater’s faces in order to make them spitting images of their NHL counterparts. The creative team at EA Canada spent more than a year adding the real faces of more than 700 active NHL players to the player models for the ultimate in realism.

‘‘We have gone to great lengths to ensure that if it happens on the ice, it will occur in NHL 2001," said Executive Producer Rory Armes. ‘‘The PlayStation 2 has allowed us to raise the bar graphically and with how the game plays. We think that gamers will feel an emotional involvement in the game, as if they were actually on the ice and because of this we think this will be the most fun and immersive console hockey game ever," continued Armes.

NHL 2001 offers a variety of game modes to choose from including: Quick Game, Season Play, Playoffs, Shootout and Tournament. Season mode has been enhanced, as gamers become General Manager and trade for star players or create their own cyber skaters. NHL 2001 also affords gamers the ability to customize numerous settings to their own preference. With the ‘‘Customize Gameplay" option, players use bar sliders to adjust speed, scoring, checking, shooting, and more. Everything from the way the puck bounces to checking aggressiveness can be tweaked to perfection.

Adding to the realism is the Momentum Meter that fluctuates during the game according to each team's performance on the ice. As in the NHL, scoring key goals, making big hits, and dramatic comebacks increase team moral and pump the team up, while the opposite adversely affects the team, and now players can experience these intangible boosts and lulls while playing NHL 2001. Adding to the ease of play are the Big Shots and Big Hitters icons. These icons, in the shape of a hockey stick blade for Big Shots and a hammer for Big Hitter, allow newcomers the ability to easily identify their prolific scorers and check-minded defenders with ease. In addition, more responsive controls provide an easy to learn and enjoyable experience. Longtime NHL series fans will be excited with the advanced control with real maneuvers, as well as all new goalie and defensive Artificial Intelligence.

Real players physics new motion captured moves from NHL players and new checks performed by Hollywood stuntmen, deliver the life-like checks, shots and skate cycles seen in the game. There are exciting ways to score, such as cannon shots from the point, one-footed wristers, and a shot-meter that allows gamers to gauge shot velocity. All these features combined make NHL 2001 the most intuitive and realistic interactive hockey experience to date.

Developed by EA Canada, NHL 2001 is rated ''E" (Everyone). NHL 2001 is analog controller compatible and supports up to eight players. The game has a suggested retail price of $49.95. NHL 2001 is also available for the PlayStation ($39.95) and PC ($39.95).

989 Sports' NBA Shootout 2001 Takes NBA Action Above the Rim On PlayStation Game Console

Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. announced that NBA ShootOut 2001 from 989 Sports returns to the PlayStation game console with newly redesigned gameplay, amazingly realistic player and arena models, more than 400 motion-captured animations, an enhanced TV-style presentation that features new camera angles and expanded commentary by New Jersey Nets broadcaster Ian Eagle. NBA ShootOut 2001 brings the essence of NBA basketball to the PlayStation game console with extensive rosters featuring veteran and rookie players from all 29 NBA teams, authentic NBA playbooks, real NBA arenas and the ability to play in the NBA All-Star Game, Playoffs and NBA Finals.

NBA ShootOut 2001 joins a basketball videogame franchise that has always been graphically impressive, and now the gameplay is better than ever before. Controls have been made more intuitive and the game engine has been redesigned, resulting in the best playing hoops game around. Improved Touch Shooting lets gamers control the accuracy of the shot and with Advanced Dribbling Control, players can change dribbling style on the fly to dazzle opponents with between-the-leg dribbles and behind-the-back moves.

''By delivering the most realistic basketball action for the PlayStation game console, NBA ShootOut 2001 will earn the respect of NBA fans and gamers alike," said Ami Blaire, director of product marketing, Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. ''Filled with a host of new features, the redesigned game engine will make it a can't miss hit with all basketball fans."

NBA ShootOut 2001 will infect true NBA fans with basketball fever in a way

that only 989 Sports and PlayStation can. Real NBA stars including the Phoenix Suns' three-time all-star Jason Kidd and Cleveland Cavaliers' Brevin Knight have been motion captured to deliver authentic NBA moves -- more than 400 animations in all, including more than 50 signature dunks of NBA standouts. Team-specific playbooks featuring more than 450 plays designed with the help of top NBA players deliver each team's true style of play so that gamers can set the offense to utilize a dominant center or sharp-shooting swingman. Veteran NBA play-by-play commentator Ian Eagle of the New Jersey Nets calls all the action.

Sacramento Kings' two-time all-star forward Chris Webber is featured on the NBA ShootOut 2001 game cover.

NBA ShootOut 2001 New Features:

-- Compatible with PS one console, PlayStation game console and PlayStation2 computer entertainment system
-- All-new, redesigned game engine delivers new level of gameplay to accompany award-winning graphics
-- More than 400 animations include fake around-the-back passes, reverse lay-ups, finger rolls, no-look passes, spins and more than 50 signature dunks
-- NBA style playbooks, designed specifically for each team's specific style of play; all-in-all, featuring more than 450 plays designed with the help of top NBA athletes
-- Revolutionary Create Dunk option lets gamers customize their own dunking style
-- All 29 NBA teams and updated player rosters
-- All-new large 3D polygonal players scaled to actual height and weight with realistic player faces
-- Advanced Dribbling Control allows the player to change dribbling styles including between-the-leg dribbles and behind-the-back moves
-- Touch Shooting lets gamers control the accuracy of the shot
-- Customize players with the Create Player feature, including physical attributes and playing ability
-- Play Creator feature allows gamers to design custom plays and save them to their own playbook for the ultimate offensive edge
-- Motion capture animations from real NBA players, including the Phoenix Suns' three-time all-star Jason Kidd and the Cleveland Cavaliers' Brevin Knight and Trajan Langdon
-- Updated TV-style presentation includes new camera angles with more than 100 hours of play-by-play commentary from New Jersey Nets broadcaster Ian Eagle
-- True-to-life arenas with animated crowds and authentic arena music
-- "Read and React AI" lets the offense run plays that expose defensive weaknesses
-- "Matchup and Deny AI" lets the defense read and run the offense into disarray
-- Complete roster management: create, trade, release, sign and draft players
-- Control of every aspect of the game from quarter length to fatigue, player ID and auto replays
-- Gameplay modes: Exhibition, Tournament, NBA All-Star Game, Playoffs and the NBA Finals
-- Full season and game statistics
-- Real NBA awards: MVP, scoring, rebounding, Defensive Player of the Year and Rookie of the Year
-- Up to eight players with Multitap

The independent Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) rates NBA

ShootOut 2001 ‘‘E" for ‘‘Everyone." For more information about the ESRB visit www.esrb.org.

Sierra Releases First Hoyle Game for Game Boy Color, Hoyle Casino

Sierra announced the release of Hoyle Casino for Nintendo Game Boy Color, the latest product in the best-selling Hoyle game series. Produced by Sierra’s Casual Entertainment Division, Hoyle Casino is the first release into the ever-popular Game Boy Color market for the Hoyle game series. Perfect for early holiday shoppers and frequent travelers, Hoyle Casino offers multiple games with endless replay, an easy-to-use interface and Game Boy Link Cable functionality allowing two players to compete against one another. Hoyle Casino for Game Boy Color is based on and delivers the same quality as the number one best-selling Hoyle Card Games and Hoyle Casino for PC and Macintoshr, which sold over 1.3 million copies in 1999 alone.

‘‘Many people may be surprised to know that are 11 million Game Boy Color handheld systems in the U.S.," said Steve Van Horn, senior vice president and business unit manager for Sierra’s Casual Entertainment Division. ‘‘We think Hoyle Casino for Game Boy Color is a great addition to the Hoyle game series and provides not only quality graphics for which Hoyle is known, but also endless fun for the growing market of mature players."

Hoyle Casino for Game Boy Color gives players their own portable Las Vegas by bringing the top selling PC casino game to Game Boy Color fans, parents of Game Boy Color players, frequent travelers and more. Players can choose from a variety of seven real Las Vegas-style games including Blackjack, Poker, Pai Gow Poker, Craps, Roulette, Slots and Video Poker. All the games offer endless replay, quality graphics and a cast of 15 Hoyle characters to play against. Opt to play with a friend on a single unit, or compete head-to-head using a Game Boy Link Cable. Players can improve their skill using the built-in tutorial feature, which provides hints, tips, winning strategies and statistics. An easy-to-use interface and adjustable skill levels make every game challenging and fun for all players, from the novice to the expert gambler.

Available now at the MSRP of $29.95, Hoyler Casino is for Nintendo Game Boy Color and can be ordered directly by calling 1-800-757-7707. For more information, visit www.hoylegames.com.

Electronic Arts Ships "Medal of Honor Underground" for the PlayStation

Electronic Arts goes behind enemy lines with ‘‘Medal of Honor Underground" for the PlayStation game console, the next chapter to the popular World War II-inspired game.

‘‘Medal of Honor Underground" begins in 1940, not long after Germany crushed the French military and overran the country. Gamers are introduced to Manon, who has just witnessed her house destroyed and hometown occupied. With nothing left to lose, she joins one of the many clandestine resistance movements that have taken root throughout her homeland during the early days of the occupation. Over the course of the game players will experience

her ascent from a naive volunteer to a seasoned veteran who is ultimately recruited by the Americans for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), where she will eventually play a key role in the Liberation of Paris.

In order for the game to authentically portray the experience of woman in the French Resistance as well as the OSS, producers contacted and met with Elizabeth McIntosh, author of ‘‘Sisterhood of Spies," Margaret Weitz, author of ‘‘Sisters in the Resistance," and French Resistance veteran and author of ‘‘Spyglass: An Autobiography" Helene Deschamps-Adams. Through the inspiration of these individuals, Electronic Arts and DreamWorks aim to ensure that ‘‘Medal of Honor Underground" skillfully and accurately portrays the heroic contribution of women during the course of World War II.

Developed by DreamWorks Interactive, ‘‘Medal of Honor Underground" for the PlayStation console features over 24 levels of fully realized 3-D worlds encompassing seven missions in which the player must accomplish specific objectives and goals in order to succeed and advance. ‘‘Medal of Honor Underground" carries an ESRB rating of ‘‘T" for Teen and a MSRP of US$39.99.

Interplay Ships ’Super Runabout: San Francisco Edition’ for Dreamcast

Digital Mayhem, a division of Interplay Entertainment Corp., is pleased to announce that their latest racing game ‘‘Super Runabout: San Francisco Edition" for the Sega Dreamcast will begin shipping to retail outlets nationwide this week. This action-packed, ‘‘Teen" rated driving game developed by Climax Studios allows drivers to race around a highly detailed model of San Francisco.

‘‘We’re very excited to be launching "Super Runabout: San Francisco Edition‘‘ for Sega Dreamcast," said Jim Molitor, Digital Mayhem Division Director. ‘‘Anyone who has been to San Francisco will recognize the local streets and landmarks as they race around the city."

By utilizing the advanced graphics capability of the Dreamcast, ‘‘Super Runabout: SFE" features crisp graphics and a blazing fast frame-rate. Outlaw or lawman, Alcatraz to Pier 39, high-speed game missions take players all over the city with objectives ranging from saving the president to delivering baseball players in time for the big game. ‘‘Super Runabout: San Francisco Edition" allows players to choose from over 25 different vehicles and 16 different missions. Highly detailed game vehicles include sports cars, motorcycles, racecars, tanks and a number of exciting hidden vehicles. Each vehicle has unique handling characteristics providing an advantage in certain missions.

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Ballmer Confirms Microsoft Codes Intact

Microsoft President and Chief Executive Steve Ballmer repeated in Sweden Friday that the software giant’s source codes were intact despite a hacker attack on its computer systems.

In an interview with Swedish state television’s Aktuellt news program, Ballmer agreed the incident had highlighted the need for ongoing vigilance in the technology industry.

‘‘I think I can fairly say that our source codes are intact, our ability to serve our customers (is) intact. We have appropriate law enforcement agencies working with us to track down the perpetrators," Ballmer said.

Earlier the Microsoft executive, who was speaking at two Internet meetings in and near Stockholm Friday, said the hackers had seen, but not managed to change key source codes stored in the computers.

Asked if the incident posed concerns about security at the heart of the IT industry, Ballmer said: ‘‘We have an ongoing need for improvement," but he added that people should not lose confidence in using the Internet.

Ballmer was asked to clarify whether an agreement between Microsoft and South Korea’s Samsungwould would lead to competition with Sweden’s Ericsson with which Microsoft also has a software deal.

‘‘There is no doubt in my mind, or course we will license our software, that our partnership with Ericsson is the most important partnership we have in the wireless area," he said.

Referring to Microsoft’s legal dispute with U.S. authorities, Ballmer commented: ‘‘I think the law is quite clear, that we as a company are supposed to do our best job for consumers -- adding value, improving our products, listening to consumers, keeping prices low -- and that’s what we’ve done and that’s what we will continue to do and I am quite sure that on appeal the courts will agree with us."

ICANN Will Decide Last Word on the Web Addresses

From Berne and Geneva to Brussels and Washington, international organizations await judgement from a new Internet heavyweight based near the roller bladers and tattoo artists of Venice Beach, Calif.

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) of Marina Del Rey, Calif., will decide whether to grant new Internet address suffixes to a who’s who of international groups and a clutch of private firms.

ICANN may decide as early as next month whether the existing well-known address extensions such as .com, .net, .org, .gov and .edu should be joined by dozen of others that have been suggested like .travel, .union, .post and .sex.

World-wide organizations for postal services, co-operatives, labor unions, airlines, transportation and health are applying.

It will be ICANN’s first big decision on how the Web is organized since receiving its charter in 1998 from the U.S. government as part of an effort to give the world a say in designing the Internet’s critically important address system.

ICANN got off to a slow start, but is finally taking over some of the responsibilities of Network Solutions Inc.(Nasdaq:NSOL - news), which had previously enjoyed a government-granted monopoly.

ICANN’s board of 19, including five chosen in an election in which 34,000 Web users voted from around the world, will get staff recommendations on the suffixes by the time it meets November 13-16.

The open question is whether ICANN will be up to the job of fairly representing the Internet’s myriad interests.

‘‘This is the first time ICANN is confronted with reality," said Sam Jabbour, head of the postal technology center at the Universal Postal Union in Berne, Switzerland.

The postal union’s 187 member countries have applied for the .post domain that would be use to denote national post forays into electronic mail and document transfers.

‘‘People will judge ICANN on how they handle the current applications," Jabbour said. ‘‘That will probably make or unmake ICANN."

ICANN’s contract with the U.S. government is up for renewal next year.

Andrew McLaughlin, ICANN Chief policy officer and one of nine employees, describes the nonprofit company’s role of assigning addresses on the Internet as ‘‘small but important," but openly acknowledges: ‘‘We regard ICANN as an experiment."

One of the newly elected board members, Carl Auerbach, is wary of ICANN trying to pick a limited number of new domain names. ‘‘This is not technical coordination," says the Cisco Systems engineer who believes thousands of new extensions should be liberally granted each year.

Applicants for the address extensions had to pay $50,000 -- a serious amount of money for groups hoping new locations will solve some serious problems.

For example, the Internet has become a world-wide headache for co-operatives, the democratically owned and run businesses that boast of serving 725 million people.

Local and regional laws that are supposed to assure that businesses calling themselves ‘‘co-ops" meet specific democratic principals of ownership and control have proved ineffective against poachers on the Web.

So the National Co-operative Business Association in Washington and the International Co-operative Alliance in Geneva have sought .co-op and .coop, administered by a cyber co-op in Britain.

James Love, of the Center for Study of Responsive Law in Washington, established by consumer advocate Ralph Nader, says suffixes can solve the encroachment problem.

‘‘If you go to whitehouse.gov you know it’s a U.S. government agency,"

Love said, because of the .gov suffix. "You're not worried about it being someone else who is masquerading as the White House." That means it would make no difference even if someone used whitehouse.com to promote pornography, as they do.

Controlling the last few letters of an Internet address should solve the problem of co-ops and be helpful to such groups as the Museum Domain Management Association and International Council of Museums, made up of 15,000 members in 147 countries. They are seeking the suffixes .mus, .muse, .museum and .museums.

The name would provide ''some corner of domain space that means something when it's called 'museum,"' said Cary Karp, director of the Department of Information Technology at the Swedish Museum of Natural History in Stockholm.

Others applying include the World Health Organization in Geneva, part of the United Nations, which has applied to administer .health.

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, based in Brussels, which includes the U.S. AFL-CIO and other union groups around the world, has applied for .union.

SITA, the Societe Internationale de Telecommunications Aeronautiques in Geneva, wants .air, .aer and .aero. Its international network supplying ticketing, air traffic and other information to airlines and airports was the world's largest until being overtaken a few years ago by the Internet.

The International Air Transport Association in Geneva, which works closely with SITA, has applied for .travel.

Most of the other nearly four dozen applicants are commercial. One commercial company is trying to capture more than 120 suffixes, from .air to .church and .jazz.

''It may appear that we are greedy land-grabbers," conceded Paul Garrin of New York, who owns the firm, Name.Space Inc. But, he said, ''This is a free market. We're entrepreneurs."

ICANN, at www.icann.org, has told users to beware of companies that may be trying to sell them addresses with the new suffixes now, warning that is ''premature."

AOL 6.0 Offers New Look, Features

America Online customers can now access information on the Internet by simply picking up the phone.

The company's newest version of its core software, AOL 6.0, is ''sort of the ultimate incarnation of our AOL Anywhere strategy, because telephones are everywhere," said Jonathan Sacks, a senior vice president and general manager for the Dulles, Va.-based Internet service provider.

AOL's subscribers can now retrieve up-to-date information such as weather forecasts and sports scores by dialing a toll-free number and giving a series of voice commands.

The service, introduced Wednesday, will be available for free through January 2001, Sacks said. After that, AOL will charge $4.95 a month in addition to its monthly subscription charge of $21.95.

Scott Reamer, an analyst with SG Cowen Securities Inc. in New York, said it's only a small percentage of customers who want Internet access through the phone. But AOL has to reach out to those customers because upstart companies like Tellme Networks, which already provides voice-activated Internet access through the telephone, can fill the niche if AOL won't.

''As AOL gets larger and larger, it needs to cater to customers at all levels," Reamer said. ''The variation and types of services AOL provides will only increase from here."

AOL, which announced Tuesday that it reached the 25 million subscriber mark, was not the only Internet service provider to show off a new look Wednesday. Microsoft released its new MSN service Wednesday.

MSN has a much smaller share of the market - about 3.5 million subscribers - but it has repackaged its services in an effort to bite into AOL's base. The centerpiece is a new Web browser that features one-click access to a number of services such as MSN MoneyCentral and its bill payment service, the free Hotmail e-mail service, and MSN Messenger, which provides instant messaging and free long-distance phone calls via the Internet.

The browser can be downloaded for free from MSN's home page, even if Microsoft is not your Internet service provider. Actual Internet access through MSN costs $21.95 a month, the same as AOL.

AOL 6.0 also revamps the company's popular instant messaging service. Sacks said changes were designed with teen-agers in mind, given that teens are the most prodigious users of the product. The new AOL allows users to send about 110 different icons, from smiley faces to flowers, alongside text messages.

AOL 6.0 also includes a new media player, allowing users to listen to online music and radio broadcasts over the Web.

Overall, Sacks said AOL 6.0 is redesigned and repackaged to display the most popular features prominently, making them easy for subscribers to find.

''It's going to be familiar, but better. It's very similar but evolutionary," Sacks said.

While he said AOL goes to great effort to make its service easy to use for people unfamiliar to the Internet, he bristled at the notion that AOL serves as ''the Internet on training wheels," a service that people will abandon as they become more savvy about the online world.

''It just doesn't track with common sense. Human beings don't want to work that hard," he said. ''A lot of people can drive a stick shift but they buy cars with automatic transmissions. It brings a level of convenience. ... AOL is the Internet with an automatic transmission."

Reamer said AOL has addressed the issue by adding so many services, either through acquisition or in-house development, that it caters to everybody's needs.

''Look at the data. They've grown and grown. That, to me, is the proof in

the pudding," Reamer said.

As it has in the past, AOL will mail many thousands of CDs directly to consumers. In addition, the company will launch a series of television ads and make its CDs available for free in the stores of about 50 retail partners.

Internet Filter Plan Hits Snag

The Internet-filtering software pushed by Congress to protect children from smut online is blocking far more than pornography. It accidentally screens out innocent content like a Virginia lawyer’s home page and a Texas home inspector’s Web site.

The software’s uneven performance puts a snag in the politically attractive solution that Congress is trying to include in an education spending bill before it adjourns.

The measure’s supporters admit the tools aren’t perfect and want communities also to study other ways to combat child pornography on the World Wide Web.

‘‘We need to make sure we’re looking at the whole issue and everything that’s out there. Filters won’t be a cure-all," said Melissa Sabatine, a spokeswoman for Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa., co-sponsor of the legislation.

The White House and civil liberties groups worried about free-speech implications of filtering oppose the measure, as does, ironically, the maker of the most popular Internet filter. The bill’s specific language impedes innovation, the company called SurfCONTROL contends.

‘‘Things that mandate specific technologies probably aren’t the best solution here. Let the free market decide, and let us improve these products all the time," said Susan Getgood, a SurfCONTROL vice president.

SurfCONTROL owns the two most-used filtering tools, CyberPatrol and SurfWatch. Its technology also powers America Online’s Web filter.

‘‘My chief criticism is that I don’t think it’s necessary because schools are already doing what they need to do to protect their students," Getgood said.

More than 9 million home users and 17,000 schools and school districts use SurfCONTROL’s products.

Peacefire, an anti-filtering group, set up the most popular Internet filters to scan through the 1,000 active ".com" addresses. The study found error rates in the filters, reflecting how many sites were blocked that should not have been, of 34 percent to 82 percent.

Just filtering for sexual content, CyberPatrol blocked out four obviously nonpornographic sites for each porn site it found. SurfWatch had a similar error rate.

The blocked sites, including those owned by a lawyer and a home inspection company, had no obvious triggers such as racy language, pictures or double-entendres. Getgood could not explain each specific error, but

suggested that some of the Web addresses might have been previously owned by pornographers.

Getgood said no filter is perfect, but all the sites CyberPatrol blocks are reviewed by the company’s employees.

‘‘No one has ever claimed that these things will be 100 percent foolproof," Getgood said, adding that the company still is improving the product. ‘‘We’ve all gotten better. Your critics can be your best friends."

Bennett Haselton, head of Peacefire, said the filtering mistakes bring up serious free-speech issues.

‘‘When even one book is taken out of a library, people get outraged over it. This is a case of hundreds of thousands of Web sites being eliminated," Haselton said. ‘‘People don’t know about it, because blocking software companies don’t tell customers what they block."

No End to E-mail Marketing in Sight

Watch out -- junk e-mail has just gotten started, according to a new report from eMarketer, a data analysis firm. The study claims that combined expenditures of e-mail marketing products, services and email advertising will increase from US$1 billion at year-end 2000, to $4.6 billion by 2003, an increase of 360 percent.

The e-mail Marketing Report identifies e-mail as the current dominant Internet application, used more frequently than the World Wide Web.

The report finds that 61 percent of medium to large-sized companies in the U.S. are currently implementing e-mail marketing into their business strategies to market towards prospects and/or customers. Among direct marketers, 62 percent presently have e-mail marketing capability, and an additional 23 percent said they are considering implementing e-mail marketing by year-end 2000.

Among the other interesting findings of the study are that by year-end 2000, there will be 96.6 million e-mail users aged 14 and older. This represents 43.8 percent of the total population of adults and teens.

Another scary statistic is that Spam (or unsolicited e-mail) accounts for 10 percent of total e-mail volume in the United States.

Aladdin Releases StuffIt 6.0, for OS X

Aladdin Systems today released new versions of its popular file compression and decompression utilities DropStuff, StuffIt Expander, and StuffIt Deluxe. All products have been upgraded to version 6.0. While individual products have unique features in this update, all of them share one common trait: support for Mac OS X Public Beta.

StuffIt Deluxe is a full-featured compression utility. The software sports all of the functionality of DropStuff and StuffIt Expander, with a

multitude of enhancements and additional features.

StuffIt Deluxe 6.0 sports a brand new interface. The software also supports a new feature called ReturnReceipt, which notifies users by e-mail when StuffIt-compressed attachments are received and opened. New archive search functionality has been added, and the software also works with Mac OS X Public Beta.

StuffIt Deluxe can be purchased for US$79.95 from Aladdin. Registered owners of StuffIt Deluxe, DropStuff, DropZip, or StuffIt Lite can upgrade to StuffIt Deluxe 6.0 for only $29.95. If you purchased StuffIt Deluxe 5.5 between Oct. 1 and Oct. 31, you qualify for a free upgrade -- details are available from Aladdin's Web site.

DropStuff 6.0 is a utility that enables users to automatically compress files or folders using the StuffIt Engine by dragging and dropping them onto the DropStuff icon. The software is made available as shareware and carries a registration fee of US$30. Upgrading from previous versions is free.

The new version now sports compatibility with Mac OS X Public Beta.

StuffIt Expander 6.0 provides Mac users with a way of decompressing just about every commonly used archive format for Mac OS or Windows. Like DropStuff, the software is drag and drop and it can be triggered by a variety of popular Internet applications.

Version 6.0 incorporates support for new file formats, features a built-in version checker, requires no external extensions for text encoding, and works with Mac OS X Public Beta. It is free to download and use.

Aladdin's StuffIt and DropStuff products require a PowerPC-based Mac running Mac OS 8.1 or higher.

Amiga Seeks Life Through Partners

After six years, new hardware is on the way from Amiga partners Eyetech and bPlan. But has the opportunity been lost?

It's been a topsy-turvy ride for former computer maker Amiga Inc. And the only thing that has kept the company and its platform afloat has been its fanatical audience. But with only one new piece of hardware in the last six years, even fanatics have their limits.

Three months ago the company announced its latest hardware specifications, AmigaOne, and over the weekend it announced its latest hardware partners: Eyetech Group Ltd., based in the U.K., and bPlan of Germany.

Eyetech will produce motherboards, while bPlan will release whole systems.

The company made it clear in a news release that AmigaOne is a technology specification, or blueprint, and not a product. Amiga has recast itself as a software company and not the computer manufacturer that users were drawn to.

This distinction is important because, according to Amiga CEO Bill McEwan, it allows the company to focus on its software, Amiga Digital Environment

(AmigaDE) -- co-developed with U.K.-based Tao Group.

AmigaDE acts similar to an operating system, but it is scalable so that it can run on a number of processors and in conjunction with other OSes.

"Flexibility adds value," McEwan said. "Now the OEM can decide what to use the AmigaDE for, what type of device and what type of environment."

McEwan said the platform is so scalable that it can be used on devices from cell phones to computers, and users can expect the same experience regardless of the environment.

But not everyone is impressed with Amiga's latest steps.

The Amiga effort is "more hype than substance," according to Gartner vice president and analyst Martin Reynolds. Reynolds called the specifications generic and said that Amiga was living off past glories.

"They are emulating old stuff on new hardware and trying to bring a base of older applications into new areas," Reynolds said. "They are playing on an existing base of Amiga applications, and it's clear that that is a faded market."

The specification allows for AmigaDE to be run on up to 14 processors including, PowerPC, x86, ARM, MIPS, and SH4, and nine operating systems, including all flavors of Windows and Linux.

The specification also calls for 64MB of memory support and a 10GB hard drive. The AmigaOne platform supports graphics cards, audio cards, CD/DVD, Ethernet, USB (Universal Serial Bus), FireWire, and 56Kbps modems.

The Eyetech and bPlan announcements are the first of many on the way, according to McEwan.

The Eyetech deal is strictly for motherboards, which can be used with existing Amiga systems and will cost in the range of $499. Eyetech products are expected to ship to developers in December, with products on the street by early in the first quarter of 2001.

While this provides an upgrade path for the Amiga faithful, it does little to grow the Amiga market with new users.

And that is the plan with bPlan's systems. Further details of the bPlan systems are expected next week. McEwan said the systems would be in the $800 range. not including monitors.

McEwan estimates that Amiga has a following of about a half-million users based on monthly subscriptions to Amiga magazines worldwide.

Despite its enthusiastic fan base, Amiga has had trouble finding similar corporate support.

After going bankrupt Amiga was scooped up by PC manufacturer Gateway Inc. in 1997. The acquisition was part of Gateway's surge into the nascent information appliance market. But Gateway shifted gears and aligned itself with Internet service provider giant America Online Inc. in developing information appliances due out at the end of the year.

With Amiga essentially dying on the vine, the PC manufacturer sold Amiga to Washington-based Amino, which is targeting home desktop users with

multimedia capabilities.

Napster Opens Doors to Mac Owners

Napster on Wednesday released a Macintosh version of its wildly popular file-swapping software, officially welcoming Apple computer users to the free-music revolution.

The release comes 15 months after the service first launched, squeaking in under the wire as a federal appeals court considers whether to shut Napster down.

Napster for the Mac, as the program is called, includes a few new features not available in the PC version. New toolbars are brightly colored to match the design of Apple's popular iMac models. In addition, the application allows people to keep track of their last 10 searches.

This is the first "official" version of the software for Mac users. Earlier this year, a group of programmers figured out a code that allowed the Macintosh to connect with Napster's service and dubbed it Macster. The music company then hired the team to develop a legitimate program for the Mac.

All the while, Napster has been fighting for its life in federal court.

The company is embroiled in a copyright dispute with the Recording Industry Association of America, which won a court order in July that could effectively shutter the service any day. That judgment is under appeal in the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco.

Napster, founded in 1999, is one of the fastest-growing Net technologies. A recent study showed that Napster was used to download 1.39 billion songs in September, making it one of the Internet's most popular applications.

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